

SECRET

VOLDENORS ARAJS

Woldemars BLANKENFELDS

Subject's birth: 23 October, 1918 in Tuckums, Latvia.

Citizenship: Latvian citizen

Profession: Mate, policeman, and student

Address in Latvia: Bleskowerstrasse 52 Apartment 17, Riga

Address in Sweden: Pastellvägen 38, 1st floor, S Ström, Stockholm

Passport: Subject has Provisoriskt Främlingspass No. 16A, dated 12.7.44 and valid until 11.10.44. Issued by Statens Utlännings Komisjon. Permit to stay in Stockholm from 20 August until 20 September, 1944.

Church: Baptized in Tuckums and confirmed in Riga. Belongs to the Evangelist-Luthern Church.

Wife: Zenta Zinaida, maiden name - KROHNBERGS. Born in Windau on 1.8.22. Address: Bleskowerstrasse 52, Apartment 17, Riga.

Child: Gunnars, born 8.7.41 in Windau.

Father: Ernest BLANKENFELDS, 48 years of age, hair dresser. Lives at Bleskowerstrasse 52, Apartment 17, Riga.

Mother: Anna BLANKENFELDS, 48 years old, hair dresser. Same address.

Brothers: His parents have a hair dressing salon at Pferdstrasse 5, Riga.

(1) Mikalis BLANKENFELDS, 24 years old. Employed by an insurance company. Was deported to Siberia by the Russians in 1941 during the Russian occupation.

(2) Igors BLANKENFELDS, 22 years old, hair dresser. Is living with his parents.

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Neither Subject nor any of his family have been members of any political organization. His brother, Igors, has taken part in the war on the Eastern Front since April 1942 as a so-called "volunteer". In fact, however, the Germans mobilized the Latvian youth for war service (see later).

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Then they had to undress, the women as well as the men, put their clothes into the chests and then descend into the graves which had been dug previously. (About ten meters long, 5 meters broad, and 4 to 5 meters deep). There were steps into the graves. Women who broke down were dragged to the graves by the hair and thrown down. Some tried to escape but they were killed at once either with the end of the gun or by shots.

Machine guns were then placed around the graves and they opened fire upon the Jews. Group followed group in this manner (with regard to the children, Subject has heard that they were killed by poison). Those who fired the guns were both Germans and Latvian policemen from the ordinary police. Some Latvians from the harbor police also took part in the shooting from time to time because they got schnaps liquor (schnaps) from the Germans and because it made it possible for them to steal the jewelry and valuables from the Jews' possessions despite the fact that the Germans had forbidden it. Subject does not remember the names of those from the Latvian police who took part in the murdering. At this time, the Araja Command was not organized and, therefore, it did not take part in this early slaughter. The Jews who were shot during this time were only those who could not be used for important German war work. The Ghetto in Riga was watched by one German and one Latvian guard. The Latvian guard was voluntary. (Subject does not know the names of the leaders or of the others who carried on the guard duties service in the Ghetto. He has never had any connection with the Ghetto and the only thing he knows about the circumstances there is that the Jews only got half a ration of food and other goods.)

The slaughter in November, 1941, lasted only for three nights, then it ceased until December at which time, probably 12 to 15,000 Jews were again murdered. In this way it continued with shorter or longer pauses during the time Subject lived in Riga. A number of Jews in the Ghetto succeeded in escaping, especially Jews who had money. The Subject, personally helped a Jew he knew before the war who had been very helpful to him during his studying and schooling time in Riga when Subject had had little money. BLANKENFELDS saw to it that this Jew, his sister, and a friend of theirs got false papers. He does not know, however, whether or not they left Latvia. The names of these Jews were

Izaka MORGENBURGERS, Liza MORGENBURGERS, and Heinz HACKELS. Before the Ghetto was established, the former two lived first at Rigasche Strand IV, Linie 8, and later at Vilandesstrasse 18-8.

Early in 1942, ARAJS appeared with his so-called "Kommando". About ARAJS, Subject only knows that he was a corporal in the former Latvian Army and about 28-30 years old. He does not know how big ARAJS' command was but he is sure that it wasn't more than a thousand men. He does not know the names of any of the leaders or other members of ARAJS' command because Subject was arrested by the Germans already on the first of June, 1941, and, therefore, could not see the Command in its full bloom. The organization consisted principally of Riga gutter-snipes. During this first period, the former Latvian Army uniforms with an armband with a skull on it and the inscription SIPO, were used. Later they wore German SD uniforms and were equiped with pistols. They regularly took part in all the shootings of the Jews and were paid by the Germans.

About the German SIPO in Riga, Subject can give no information of interest. He only knows that the leader was Sturmbannführer LANGE. In addition, he knew three names from SS and Polizeigericht Riga -- namely, ~~REINHOLD~~ undersökelses-ledaren Sturmbannführer HINTZE, Gerichtsprokuror (?) Sturmbannführer REIPERTS and Gerichtsprokuror Leutnant LEONOR.

During the Russian occupation of Latvia, patriotic Latvians had gatherings during the nights of clean social art. They sang the Latvian national hymn, discussed the terrors of the occupying powers and Latvia's possibilities for becoming once again free. The meetings were held secretly and the members of the groups were arrested and deported or shot by the Russians when they were discovered.

Afterwards, as the Germans' terror against the Latvian people increased, it was more and more clear to the people that the German "liberation" was merely a farce and that the circumstances were as horrible as during the German occupation. Therefore, the patriot groups came to life once again and were the object of a sharp persecution from the Germans. Now the patriots' hopes for liberation were with the Americans and British. The entire organization was named "Tautas Bals" (People's Voice) and during the last period before Subject was arrested, the Tautas Bals prepared sabotage against German troop transports and

tactics).

During this first period, the Germans only pursued those persons in Latvia who had worked with the Russians. A great many young Latvian boys enlisted for war service on the German side voluntarily. After this 3-month period, there was a gradual decreasing of the amount of food and goods because the Germans took more and more for their own use. A very strict rationing of goods and food was instituted. The German put their own people in all leading positions within Latvian commercial and industrial life and in the official administration of the country. After some months (Subject does not remember exactly when) there was set up, for example, a German Reichskommissar, a Generalkommissar and a Gebietskommissare. Edicts were given and prohibitions of different kinds. The arrests increased afterwards and a great number of Latvians were arrested apparently without reason. At the beginning of March, 1942, the Germans arranged ordinary mobilization of boys born between 1920 and 1924. The mobilization was published in all Latvian newspapers and failure to comply would, according to the publishing, be very severe punishment. When the boys met for registering, they had to sign a paper ~~stating~~ stating that they enlisted voluntarily. In this way, Subject's brother happened to join the Germans in the war.

The Jewish persecutions increased and reached, as far as Subject knows, their first climax in November-December, 1941, when thousands of Jews were arrested and put into concentration camps and shot in the woods at Salaspils and Bikernieku, 18 kilometers west and about 15 kilometers east of Riga respectively. At this time the Ghetto was established. Subject, himself, was witness to the execution of 6-7,000 Jews at Salaspils late in November, 1941. Subject then went out to the execution place in his own car to see how it was carried on (At this time, Subject was employed at the Latvian Harbor Police). The Jews came marching in long columns and Subject did not see any that were younger than 10 years among them. He saw a number of pregnant women in the columns. Those who were not able to follow the column because of sickness or old age ~~were shot on the road~~ were shot on the road. About 500 meters from the execution spot, the command ~~ing~~ halt was given and the Jews were led further in groups of 30 to 50. At the execution spot, several chests were placed for shoes, underclothing, and other clothes, for jewelry and valuables.